

4 September 1946

Major General Maxwell D. Taylor  
Superintendent, United States Military Academy  
West Point, New York

Dear General Taylor:

I must apologize for the delay in answering your kind letter of 22 August. However, the press of urgent affairs incident to the opening of our new Air University yesterday has kept me so fully occupied that I simply could not manage a reply up until today. I am very pleased to forward you the whole story of our Board of Visitors.

At the time I was designated to organize and head the Air University, I was very conscious of my deficiency in knowledge of the best techniques of modern education and particularly the advances which had been made in recent years in this field. I felt that the same deficiencies existed in the military personnel that I could hope to associate with myself in this enterprise. It therefore seemed essential to me to call upon representatives from the civilian field of higher education to advise us.

After consultation with several people connected with civilian institutions of higher education, it was decided that the best method of obtaining advice and assistance in solving our problems would be through the creation of a Board of Visitors. It was the idea that the Board of Visitors would meet at the Air University from time to time as occasion seemed to warrant and the press of their own affairs would permit. The problems and difficulties which we at the Air University might have recognized would then be presented to the Board and their advice sought as to the best method of procedure. In addition, the Board was to be encouraged and given every facility to inquire into everything that we were doing at the Air University, in order to determine if we were making mistakes which we ourselves did not recognize.

At first I had intended to appoint the Board myself and have it report to me as Commanding General of the Air University. However, further consideration resulted in my decision to request General Spaatz, as Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, to appoint the Board and have it report directly to him. There were several reasons for this decision. First was the matter of the prestige if it were appointed by the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces rather than by the Air University itself. Also there was the matter of the freedom and independence of the Board. If

appointed by the Commanding General of the Air University, the Board would, of course, report directly to him and he might reject its recommendations at his pleasure. However, if the Board were to be appointed by the Commanding General, Army Air Forces, it would, in effect, act as his educational inspector and would keep the Commanding General advised as to the functioning of his Air University and as to any changes necessary either in its management or in its basic policies. This line of reasoning might not at all apply to the Military Academy, however, and it might be better in your case for you to appoint the Board directly.

After the most careful consideration and consultation with experts in the field of higher education, a list of thirteen outstanding educators of the country was drawn up and General Spaatz sent each a letter of invitation to become a member of the Board of Visitors of the Air University. I had expected at the most to receive eight or ten acceptances and was quite prepared to be happy with five or six. To my pleased astonishment, we received twelve enthusiastic acceptances in spite of the already heavy demands on the time of these outstanding men. The twelve members of our Board of Visitors are as follows:

C  
O  
P  
Y

Dr. Isaiah Bowman  
President, Johns Hopkins University

Dr. Karl T. Compton,  
President, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Dr. James B. Conant  
President, Harvard University

Dr. Clarence A. Dykstra  
Provost, University of California at Los Angeles

Dr. Willard E. Givens  
Executive Secretary, National Educational Association

Dr. Raymond R. Paty  
President, University of Alabama

Mr. Elliott Dunlap Smith  
Provost, Carnegie Institute of Technology

Dr. Francis T. Spaulding  
President, University State of New York and Commissioner of  
Education

Dr. Robert L. Stearns  
President, University of Colorado

Dr. George D. Stoddard  
President, University of Illinois

Dr. John W. Studebaker  
United States Commissioner of Education

Dr. George F. Zook  
President, American Council on Education

We had the first meeting of our Board of Visitors the middle of June, at which time eight members were present, the remaining four being unable to come at that time. Of course the Air University was not yet in actual operation. The Board inquired most carefully into our plans for the several constituent schools and colleges, and made numerous suggestions and recommendations. Out of their experience the members pointed out dangers that should be guarded against and various possible courses of action which might be tried out. At the conclusion of their meeting the Board prepared a comprehensive report direct to

General Spaatz, analyzing the proposed plans of the Air University, pointing out some of the difficulties and dangers which they foresaw for the future, and stating the intention of the Board to meet again the middle of March 1947 to inquire into the actual functioning of the Air University after one semester of operation. I anticipate that at that time they will give us a very thorough going-over. They will be interested in organization, technique and methods of instruction and presentation, test construction and evaluation, and in general the whole functioning of the Air University system except the technical matter of course content, which of course lies outside the field of their competence.

I must say that I think very highly of the idea of the Board of Visitors and expect great assistance from it. I believe it will materially improve the level of military education here at the Air University. These men have given their whole lives to the field of higher education and have achieved outstanding success in that field. If anyone can help us build an outstanding institution of higher military education, they should be able to do it.

I am, of course, tremendously flattered by your proposal to send some of your staff officers here to the Air University during the coming year to observe its workings. It will be a great pleasure to have them come and a great privilege to do anything that might be of the slightest assistance to your wonderful institution.

Sincerely yours,

MUIR S. FAIRCHILD,  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

C  
O  
P  
Y